

MPs build esprit de corps with Warrior Challenge

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How would you like to flip a 400 pounds Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck tire after a 10-kilometer march with a 35 pound rucksack?

That was but one of the many events of the 'Rock Solid Challenge' which seven teams of three MP Soldiers each had to accomplish during a recent one-day competitive Warrior Challenge and drills exercise.

According to 1st Lt. Paul A. DelleDonne, this event was planned to foster unit cohesion, sharpen the Soldiers' skills and assess proficiency. "We will conduct this event once a year so the Soldiers can experience camaraderie at its best," said DelleDonne.

The competition started with a ten-kilometer rucksack march to the Military Operations on Urban Terrain site, or MOUT, where six different challenges awaited the Soldiers.

Then each team had to push a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, commonly known as a HMMWV, weighing 5,600 pounds, plus extra weight and driver, adding an additional 250 pounds. The HMMWV had to be pushed over a distance of 250 meters in a specific time limit - the fastest team managing the task in just 54 seconds.

This event was followed by an obstacle course comprising of 15 push-ups, hurdle jump, tire jog, low crawl, litter carry, entering a house, carrying heavy canisters and re-entering the house, tire flip, log carry and sprint to the finish line. The fastest time for this course was eight minutes and 43 seconds.

Teams were then put to a map reading and land navigation test followed by an observation lane on the roof of a three story building. This exercise tested the teams ability to work together in spotting and identifying potential hazards in their field of view, ranging out to 200 meters, and then accurately describing the spotted object, ranging from IEDs and M16s to uniforms and boots.

Using a high powered binocular set, scope and compass,

the Soldiers were graded on the accuracy of their descriptions to the plotting of the located items on a map found by azimuth and obtaining grid coordinates all in less than 15 minutes. The best team spotted a total of 10 out of 16 objects in the given timeframe.

The final event at the MOUT site was an exercise on proper execution on entering and clearing a two-story building.

As the teams finished at the MOUT site, they strapped on their rucksacks again and

marched on to the indoor M9 range - uphill all the way of course. Here they were required to perform a 'stress fire' shoot where precision, team work and mental toughness were tested. Each team faced a pile of assorted weapon parts—M9 pistol, M16 rifle and M249 automatic rifle – initially just a heap of metal. Teams had four minutes to separate parts and assemble the three weapons from scratch, including a function check. One team passed this task in an incredible one minute and ten

seconds. In the second part of this event, teams had 15 shots to shoot with the M9 pistol at targets of varying difficulty at a 15-meter distance in a position of their choice, standing or laying down.

"By the end of the day, Soldiers were tired and fatigued but in great spirits. They passed all challenges as teams, displaying extraordinary enthusiasm," said 2nd Lt. Michael W. Leggett.

After a grueling seven-hour day Soldiers marched back to the MOUT site for the final

event - an agility exercise of pushups and sit-ups requiring each team of three to have at least one person performing the exercise for two minutes.

At that point, the familiar rucksack was mounted again and all participants marched back another three kilometers to the initial mount site.

"Emphasis was on safety and well-being of the Soldiers as well as building esprit de corps. It will become an annual event," said Sgt. 1st Class Paul K. Brasso.



Photo by Madeleine Dwoiakowski

Pvt. Nikita D. Martinez, Sgt. Janet L. Ybarra, and Pfc. Cody A. Emmond share a laugh as they enter the first part of the obstacle course.



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Sgt. Janet L. Ybarra is assisting Pfc. Nikita D. Martinez into the hands of fellow teammate Pfc. Cody A. Emmond as he pulls her into a building.



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Staff Sgt. Juan J. Rodriguez clocks the pace of Sgt. Jeremy C. Pough, Pfc. Manuel S. Jas, and Pfc. Patrick S. Boardley as they scramble to put together the parts of the M249, M9 and M4 which were all placed in a box.